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RR RUEHAG RUEHROV
DE RUEHTC #0380 1260718
ZNY CCAA ZZH
R 050718Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1407
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
RUEHVJ/AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO 0206
RUEHSQ/AMEMBASSY SKOPJE 0532
RUEHTI/AMEMBASSY TIRANA 0523
RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB 1973
RUEHPS/AMEMBASSY PRISTINA 0687

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000380

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/28/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [EU](#) [SE](#) [NL](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/SERBIA: FM PLEASED WITH SAA AGREEMENT
FOR SERBIA

REF: A. DEGLAIN-FALLS EMAIL 3/29/08

[1](#)B. THE HAGUE 372

[1](#)C. THE HAGUE 296

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Schofer for reasons 1.5(b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) On April 29, Ard van der Vorst, Dutch MFA Western Balkans Coordinator for Political Affairs, told POLOFF that FM Verhagen was pleased to sign the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with Serbia. The GAERC language provides that the SAA will not be implemented until Serbia fully cooperates with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Verhagen's spokesman Bart Rijs reported that the Dutch were "satisfied" that a "gesture could be made toward Serbia," while the principle of a requirement for full cooperation "has not been undermined" (ref A).

[1](#)2. (C) Van der Vorst noted that MFA DG for Political Affairs De Gooijer negotiated the agreement with his counterparts in Luxembourg. Until the night of April 28, the Dutch had tried various solutions to resolve the issue, including protocols to the SAA, with no success. The French and British were helpful in reaching agreement, while the Slovenians were less helpful. Van der Vorst described the process as not "fluid."

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT: FM Verhagen's domestic challenge was to artfully back away from a previous pledge not to sign an SAA before Serbia cooperated with the ICTY (reftel C). Parliament's move to give Verhagen a freer hand to negotiate (reftel B) gave the FM the cover he needed. On a pragmatic and principled level, Verhagen can still claim victory, as he has made a gesture to pro-EU Serbs while keeping up pressure to cooperate with the ICTY. Verhagen may be asking Dutch voters to read and Serb voters to ignore the fine print of the GAERC conclusions. END COMMENT.
Gallagher